

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. ISTOOK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ISTOOK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### VETERANS TRANSITIONAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FOX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address my colleagues on two important veterans issues.

There is a national veterans problem. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, approximately one in three homeless Americans are military veterans, an estimated 250,000 men and women.

According to VA reports, homeless veterans overwhelmingly suffer from serious psychiatric or substance abuse disorders. Numerous studies have shown that destructive, addictive behavior and homelessness are inexorably linked. Chemical dependency, post-traumatic stress disorder and chronic physical problems affect a high percentage of homeless veterans. Approximately 75 percent of homeless veterans have a problem with alcohol and drugs, a rate of abuse higher than their nonvet counterparts, according to providers of services to homeless veterans.

A shortfall of transitional housing for homeless veterans exists because Federal programs targeted specifically at these veterans currently serve only a fraction of those in need. To accommodate an estimated 250,000 homeless veterans, the VA has fewer than 5,000 transitional-type beds under contract or as part of its domiciliary program for homeless veterans.

Our House Committee on Veterans' Affairs believes the most effective method of reducing the revolving door syndrome plaguing the VA health care system is to ensure that veterans are being discharged to residences offering a highly structured, long-term housing program that requires sobriety, accountability and assistance in finding employment.

The solution, Mr. Speaker, can be found in the Veterans Transitional

Housing Opportunities Act, which I am proud to say that the House overwhelmingly voted for yesterday. This bill establishes a pilot program at the Department of Veterans Affairs to guarantee loans to community-based organizations that serve homeless veterans.

The intent of the bill is to expand the supply of transitional housing for homeless veterans by authorizing the Veterans Affairs Secretary to guarantee loans for long-term transitional housing projects. I urge the U.S. Senate to take quick action to approve this important bill, and I thank the chairman, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP), for his hard work in bringing this bill to the floor and authoring same.

I also bring to the attention of my House colleagues, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we have approved wisely the Obey motion to make sure that we reject any cuts in veterans' benefits, including protection, tonight, of service-connected disability compensation to veterans for tobacco-related illnesses. We stand tonight by voting overwhelmingly, almost unanimously, for this amendment, which will make sure we do protect our veterans. And it has been recognized with favor by the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, and other service-related organizations.

I know this takes a step in the right direction for our veterans, and I congratulate the House again in taking two steps forward this week for our veterans, the men and women who have served our country so gallantly.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. There is going to be a special order on behalf of my very good friend, Terry Sanford, led by the gentleman from North Carolina. Unfortunately, I cannot stay, but I appreciate the gentleman from Pennsylvania giving me this opportunity to ask unanimous consent that my remarks be included in the record immediately following the remarks of the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. Sanford, Governor Sanford, was a very close friend of mine. I was one of those young people that came into politics when he was one of our most significant leaders. He was the governor of North Carolina.

He was a courageous governor of North Carolina at a difficult time and brought great credit to his State and great credit to our Nation. And I am pleased to join my friends from North Carolina in honoring this courageous, committed American who, as I said, brought great credit to North Carolina, brought great credit to his country, and was a human being who represented the very best that America had to offer.

I thank my friend from Pennsylvania for giving me that opportunity.

#### NEW APPROACH NEEDED IN NAGORNO KARABAGH PEACE PROCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about a continuing concern for our Nation's foreign policy, and that is maintaining our close ties with the Republic of Armenia and the need for a negotiated settlement in Nagorno Karabagh. I am afraid the U.S. negotiating position in this conflict has gotten seriously off track, and I am hoping that recent events will create momentum to get us in the right direction.

As I have mentioned in this House on several occasions, the people of Nagorno Karabagh fought and won a war of independence against Azerbaijan. A cease-fire has been in place since 1994, but it has been shaky at best.

The U.S. has been involved in a major way in the negotiations intended to produce a just and lasting peace. Our country is a co-chair of the international negotiating group formed to seek a solution to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict along with France and Russia. But, unfortunately, the U.S. position has sided with Azerbaijan's claim of so-called "territorial integrity", despite the fact that this land has been Armenian land for centuries, and the borders which gave the land to Azerbaijan were imposed by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

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Last week, international mediators from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, traveled to Armenia's capital of Yerevan to discuss the new Armenian government's position on the Nagorno Karabagh conflict. The American, Russian and French Armenia's negotiators heard Armenia's new foreign minister, Vartan Oskanian, reiterate Armenia's opposition to the OSCE peace plan, which calls for a phased solution to the dispute. Foreign Minister Oskanian called for a resumption of face-to-face talks between the parties to the conflict, Karabagh and Azerbaijan, without preconditions.

Mr. Speaker, in late March, the people of Armenia elected Robert Kocharian as their president. Mr. Kocharian, who actually hails from Karabagh, has insisted that the OSCE plan is essentially a non-starter since it fails to guarantee Karabagh's security and self-determination. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the previous Armenian government of President Levon Ter-Petrosian fell largely because the former President had publicly come out in support of the highly unpopular and unworkable OSCE plan, after considerable pressure from the United States I might add.